



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

www.gov.uk/defra

Flooding in England: Lead Government Department Plan

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Contents

Section 1: The Purpose and Scope of this Lead Department Plan	1
Section 2: What you need to know – National Emergency Management and the Role of the Lead Government Department	4
Section 3: Being Prepared – Key Decision Support Tools for the Lead Department	10
Section 4: The Defra Role.....	13
Section 5: Other Key National Partners - The Environment Agency and DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Team.....	22
Annex 1: Extraordinary meetings of Defra's Emergency Management Committee in the event of a Flood Emergency	27
Annex 2: Flood Management Briefing and Information Unit.....	29
Annex 3: Strategic Communications in a Flood Emergency	31
Annex 4: Situation Reporting Arrangements.....	33
Annex 5: Model Battle Rhythm and Agenda for Teleconferences.....	38
Annex 6: Checklist of key actions and decisions for Defra Staff	40

Section 1: The Purpose and Scope of this Lead Department Plan

Who is this Plan for?

This Lead Government Department Plan is designed primarily for use by Defra staff involved in flood emergency planning and those who would be involved in the response to a flooding incident. But it will also help others involved in flood emergency planning and response arrangements to design their own internal processes to fit with those of Defra.

Lead Department planning for flooding

The Lead Department Plan sets out Defra's role:

- as Lead Government Department (LGD) in Central Government planning for and responding to flooding emergencies; and
- in dealing with the consequences of flooding for other parts of its specific Departmental responsibilities - for such matters as waste, water and food supply, impacts on farming and the environment.

For the purpose of this Plan, neither role is assumed to extend beyond England. Flooding (and severe weather) elsewhere in the UK is dealt with by the Devolved Administrations (DAs. Where Defra's specific responsibilities extend to the DAs' areas, it is assumed that the policy area concerned will act to support the relevant DA directly.

In meeting our Lead Department responsibilities, we deliberately focus on the strategic objectives for the Central Government response to emergencies, which are to:

- protect human life and alleviate suffering; and, as far as possible, property and the environment;
- support the continuity of everyday activity and the restoration of disrupted services at the earliest opportunity; and
- uphold the rule of law and the democratic process.

DCLG is the Lead Government Department for flood recovery. In this role DCLG will:

- act as the focal point for communication between Central Government and the multi-agency recovery co-ordinating group(s) at local level;
- agree, across Government, clear aims and objectives for the recovery process, including criteria for standing down recovery mechanisms and structures;
- ensure that recovery issues are identified and acted on during the response phase of an emergency and that there is a smooth and effective handover from response to recovery;
- produce brief, accurate situation reports on the nature and scale of the emergency;
- produce a handling plan as soon as possible;

- draw upon and apply the relevant capabilities applicable to recovery from the emergency in hand and, if required, co-ordinate the support needed from other Government Departments and agencies through COBR;
- use its authority decisively to take whatever executive decisions and actions are needed from the centre to help the local responders to deal with it;
- co-ordinate and disseminate information for the public and the media at the national level, collaborating with other Government Departments and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat;
- account to Parliament and lead in the submission of evidence to any subsequent Government-appointed inquiry; and
- learn and share the lessons from the emergency.

This may continue to involve Defra given the impact of the recovery on Defra's specific responsibilities (environment, food and rural affairs).

To achieve the Lead Department objectives, Defra plans to be able to:

- react with speed and decisiveness;
- support local knowledge and decision-making;
- prioritise access to national resources;
- use data and information management systems to gain a national picture and support decision-making, without overburdening front-line responders;
- draw on existing legislation to respond effectively to the emergency and consider the need for additional powers; and
- work with devolved administrations and international partners to share information and request assistance if necessary.

Flooding: a frequent and unpredictable risk to life and property

We know from the Environment Agency's national assessment of flood risk (updated September 2014) that:

- one in six homes in England is at risk of flooding;
- 2.4 million properties are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea in England
- 3 million properties in areas at risk from surface water flooding; and
- Approximately 600,000 properties in areas at risk from all three types of flooding.

Although the majority of properties at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea are protected to varying standards, it is always possible for defences to be breached or overtopped, for example by flood events greater than the design standard of the defences.

Types of flooding covered by this Lead Department Plan

This Lead Department Plan covers a number of types of flooding all of which demand different approaches to flood planning and response. They are flooding from:

- rivers;
- the sea;
- groundwater;
- surface water;
- dam failure;
- artificial waterways and canals

This plan does not apply to:

- drought, drinking water and sewerage emergencies which are the responsibility of
- Defra's Water Supply and Regulation (WSR) Division; or
- damage caused by severe weather other than rainfall – e.g. wind or storm damage, the lead on which falls to the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS).

When Defra's Lead Department responsibilities end

Defra will normally scale down its Lead Department role when Ministers are satisfied that flood emergency response phase is at an end – i.e. when:

- the immediate emergency has passed; and
- satisfactory cross-Government recovery arrangements are in place.

Section 2: What you need to know – National Emergency Management and the Role of the Lead Government Department

The Lead Department concept

Within UK Central Government, Departments are accountable to Parliament for effective delivery of their responsibilities. The Lead Government Department (LGD) usually takes overall responsibility for:

- assessing the situation;
- ensuring that relevant Ministers are briefed;
- handling media and parliamentary interest; and
- providing co-ordinated policy and other support as necessary to local responders.

Other Government Departments will provide support to the LGD to ensure a coordinated response. Individual Departments will, however, remain responsible, including to Parliament, for their particular policy areas.

Where flood emergencies occur in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and fall within the competence of the relevant devolved administrations (DA), they will lead the response in their territory reporting through the relevant minister to the devolved legislature. In such circumstances the relevant UK Central Government territorial Department (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Offices) will usually be the first point of contact with the relevant DA, engaging other UK Departments as necessary, unless the nature of the emergency raises specific issues that are best handled directly with the appropriate UK Central Government lead.

Role of the Lead Government Department

The role of the Lead Government Department, in consultation with other Government Departments and with support from the Cabinet Office as necessary, is to:

- act as a focal point for communication between Central Government and the multiagency strategic co-ordinating groups on the ground;
- produce brief, accurate situation reports on the nature and scale of the emergency for use within Central Government;
- produce and implement handling plan(s) for the emergency;
- ensure that responders and affected communities have access to the resources they need to manage the emergency;
- co-ordinate and disseminate information for the public and the media at the national level, collaborating with other Government Departments including the Cabinet Office, and the News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) when activated;

- consider the need to establish a Science Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) to provide co-ordinated scientific and technical advice;
- with DCLG, ensure recovery issues are considered throughout and that arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth transition to the recovery phase;
- account to Parliament and lead in the submission of evidence to any subsequent Government-appointed or independent inquiry; and
- identify, learn and share the lessons from the planning and response to the emergency.

National emergency management

An emergency (or disruptive challenge) as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is a situation or series of events that threatens or causes serious damage to human welfare, the environment or security in the United Kingdom.

Managing any emergency comprises three main phases:

- preparation (pre-planning);
- response (mitigating an immediate risk or stopping things getting worse); and
- recovery (a longer-term activity of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community).

This Plan deals with the response phase (though the Lead Government Department is also heavily involved in the preparation phase normally). The recovery phase formally starts once the situation has been stabilised, although preparation for recovery will normally start soon after the commencement of the response phase. In other words, in most cases there will be overlap as Defra will be leading the response phase in parallel with DCLG on the recovery phase.

The response phase comprises two separate but closely-related and often overlapping matters:

- crisis management; and
- consequence (or impact) management.

These are both designed to control and minimise the immediate risks arising from an incident. In national emergency management terms, **crisis management** involves the phase of the response that attempts to prevent or avert an imminent emergency, along with work that puts in place protective or other measures to mitigate the effects of an emergency, prevent further damage or disruption and secure the scene. It also includes actions taken to address the immediate effects of an incident – and may include search and rescue, caring for the dead and injured, providing public health advice, evacuating those at risk and disseminating public information. For flooding, the duration of the crisis management phase can vary from a few hours to a few weeks, until the situation is brought under control.

Consequence management usually takes place in parallel to crisis management and is concerned with steps taken to prevent the impact of an incident escalating. It includes managing wider consequences and services such as restoring transport networks or electricity supplies, managing community relationships, and providing shelter to displaced persons. Of particular importance is consequence management in respect of critical national infrastructure (CNI) - those key elements of the national infrastructure which are crucial to the continued delivery of essential services to the UK, covering the following nine sectors:

- Communications;
- Emergency services;
- Energy;
- Finance;
- Food;
- Government;
- Health;
- Transport; and
- Water.

Managing a crisis - from local emergency to national catastrophe

The local response is the basic building block of the response to any emergency in the UK. Emergencies (or major incidents) are routinely handled by the emergency services and other local responders without the need for any significant Central Government involvement. Such emergencies may include major road crashes, localised flooding and many industrial accidents. The police will normally take the lead in co-ordinating the local response where a crime has been committed, or if there is a threat to public safety.

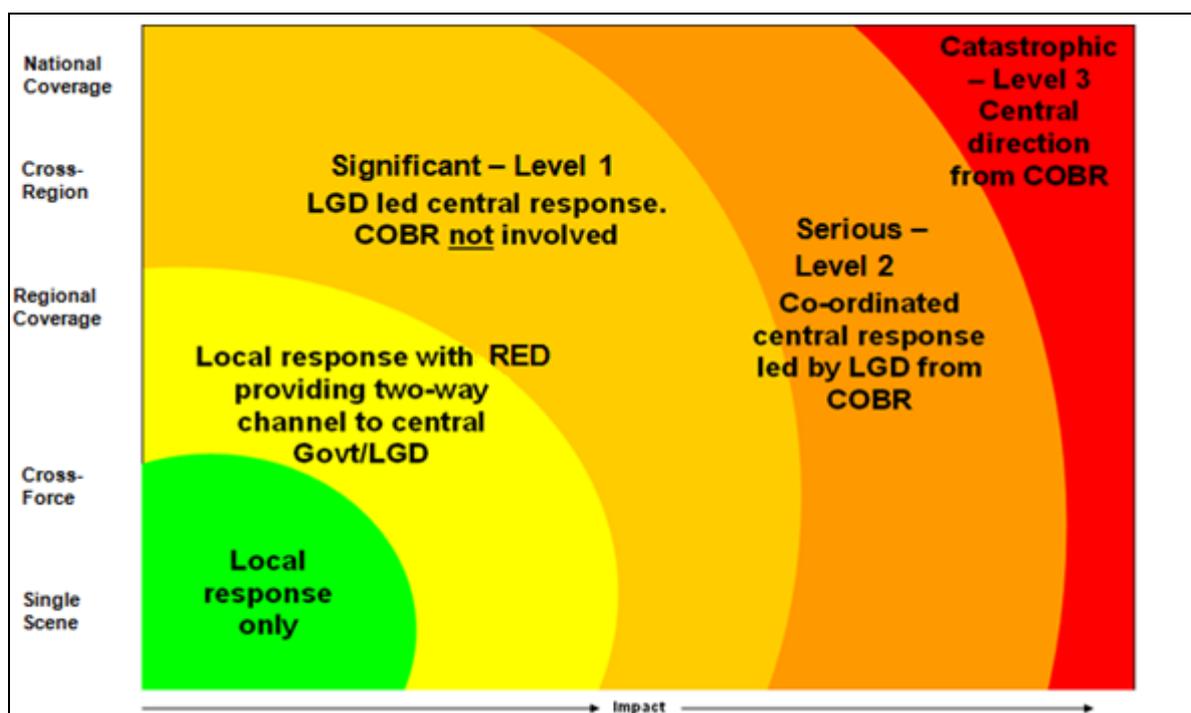
In England, the primary responsibility for planning for and responding to any major emergency rests with local organisations, acting individually and collectively through Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and Strategic Coordination Groups (SCGs). Public and private organisations need to work with and through their local forum to develop plans for maintaining critical services and business continuity during a flooding emergency and to respond to the wider challenges that will result. The local multi-agency response is co-ordinated through a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) located in the Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC). The chair of the group, whether a police lead or Local Authority Chief Executive, is often known as the Gold Commander.

The principle of subsidiarity emphasises the importance of local decision making supported, where necessary, by co-ordination at a higher level. In order to aid planning, further understanding, and provide guidance to responders and Central Government planners on when they might expect Central Government involvement in responding to an incident, three broad types (or levels) of emergency have been identified which are likely to require direct Central Government engagement.

The full detail can be found in the **Concept of Operations (or CONOPS)**¹ – the specific arrangements for the response to an emergency requiring co-ordinated UK Central Government action.

The diagram below indicates the characteristics of different levels of emergency and the likelihood of Central Government engagement according to the actual or potential spread of an emergency and its effect.

Emergency Levels



The Central Government contribution to the operational response of a Level 1 emergency will usually be led by the lead Government Department often from their own premises involving other organisations as necessary.

In the event of a Level 2 or 3 emergency the central response framework would be initiated and would involve the activation of Central Government’s crisis management facilities – the National Security Council, usually meeting in the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR). COBR would be activated in order to facilitate rapid co-ordination of the Central Government response and effective decision-making. In practice, the actual response to a specific emergency will need to take into account the nature of the challenge and other circumstances at the time.

Ministers and senior officials as appropriate from relevant UK Government Departments and agencies along with representatives from other organisations, as necessary, are brought together in COBR to facilitate effective and timely decision making based on a

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-central-government-s-concept-of-operations>

common understanding of the situation, supported by the best available specialist advice and modelling.

The Government’s response is supported as necessary by a number of separate cells and supporting blocks of activities, supported by sources of specialist advice as required. The Cabinet Office will, in consultation with the lead Government Department, decide on which components should be activated and how they might best be used. It will also provide the Secretariat support and ensure that business is managed effectively across all areas of activity in response to the emergency.

Flooding – local or national?

Flooding can occur at any time and its impacts may change rapidly. That’s why, as Lead Government Department, Defra must be ready to respond when weather forecasts or conditions are such that flooding problems are possible, even when the expectation is that any problems are likely to be within the operational capacity of local responders. Nevertheless, some guidelines are necessary.

The table below gives a broad indication of where flooding events match up to national CONOPS. However experience has shown that the media and political response to flooding events can escalate beyond the level of involvement which Defra, as Lead Government Department, might be expected to have if CONOPS is the only reference. In practice, factors such as media response, number of properties flooded, depth of flooding and impact on critical infrastructure will determine the level the emergency response and Lead Government Department involvement and role.

CONOPS levels of emergency

Level of emergency	Description	Level of engagement
3: Catastrophic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high and potentially widespread impact and requires immediate Central Government direction and support such as a 9/11 scale terrorist attack in the UK, or a Chernobyl scale industrial accident. Flooding example: floods affecting a significant proportion of England; thousands of displaced persons; serious damage to critical infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COBR/Civil Contingencies Committee. Prime Minister or nominated Secretary of State leads in the event of a catastrophic incident requiring the involvement of Central Government from the outset to deliver an effective response, or where Emergency Powers are invoked.

<p>2: Serious</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has, or threatens, a wide and prolonged impact requiring sustained Central Government co-ordination and support from many Departments and Agencies. • Flooding example: floods in several counties; hundreds of displaced persons; actual, or risk of, critical infrastructure disruptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response co-ordinated from the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) by the Lead Government Department. The crisis response may require deployment of wider Government resources. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) provides overall co-ordination and support on impact management and recovery issues.
<p>1: Significant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a narrower focus e.g. prison riots, severe weather or a terrorist attack with limited consequences. • Flooding example: floods in more than one county, some displaced persons and potential risk to critical infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lead Government Department Minister runs the crisis response from their premises using their own emergency facilities as appropriate. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CSS) advises as and when necessary.
<p>Local</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events which are routinely handled by the emergency services with Local Government, such as road crashes, localised flooding or industrial accidents. • Flooding example: local flooding; small scale evacuation; no risk to critical infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant Central Government involvement. Normally be led by the police/Gold Commander for larger emergencies.

Section 3: Being Prepared – Key Decision Support Tools for the Lead Department

Introduction

There are a number of tools available to Defra staff with responsibility for ensuring the Department is able to decide whether, and if so how, to escalate its preparedness for flooding. The most important of these are summarised below. For a fuller description of decision support tools, you should refer to the **National Flood Emergency Framework**².

Flood Forecasting

The Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) is a partnership between the Environment Agency and the Met Office, combining the organisations' meteorology and hydrology expertise to forecast for river, surface water, coastal and groundwater flood risk at a LLFA level.

With a dedicated 24/7 team based in one national centre, the FFC provides the best possible intelligence and support to existing Environment Agency flood warnings and the Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS). By combining knowledge and experience, the FFC has improved the ability to deliver countrywide longer lead time flood guidance and more accurate, targeted information to Category 1 and 2 responders. This will provide people in areas at risk of flooding with more time to protect themselves and their homes from the impacts of flooding. The FFC is responsible for arranging (with Defra) a National Flood Advisory Service teleconference. This is used to trigger escalation from a state of readiness, to one of taking action.

The FFC provides a number of services to Category 1 and Category 2 Responders in England and Wales to provide early warnings of weather events that may cause flooding:

Flood Guidance Statement

The Flood Guidance Statement (FGS) provides a daily flood risk assessment for Category 1 and 2 emergency responders to assist with strategic, tactical and operational planning decisions. This assessment of flood risk is shown by county across England and Wales over five days. It identifies developing situations that could cause flooding, threaten communities and pose a risk to lives. The FGS assesses the risk for all types of natural flooding – coastal, tidal, river, groundwater and surface water flooding.

It presents a collated assessment by the FFC and the local Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales flood forecasting teams. The FGS presents the best combined

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388997/pb14238-nfef-201412.pdf

understanding of risk based on weather forecasts, flood forecasts, catchment conditions and operational status of flood defences.

During 2011-2012 improvements were made to the FGS and the underpinning forecasting of surface water. As a consequence the Extreme Rainfall Alert (ERA) Service was discontinued. Further enhancements to the FGS include the area of concern maps with separate flood risk matrices focusing on regional, and when possible, local detail.

Coastal monitoring and forecasting

The UK Coastal Monitoring and Forecasting Service (UKCMF) provides advice on the effects weather may have on sea level and wave action. It is funded by the Environment Agency to help them assess flood risk and allowing them to issue timely warnings of coastal flooding to those who may be impacted. The service involves use of a network of automated tide-gauges for real-time data. It also provides a negative surge warning service for shipping.

The UKCMF does not provide information or forecasts of coastal flooding. It feeds into the work of the Flood Forecasting Centre and the production of the daily Flood Guidance Statements referred to above. But high tide information is available to those who register for the National Oceanography Centre's National Tidal and Sea Level Facility.

Flood warnings

The Environment Agency operates a flood warning service in areas at risk of flooding from rivers, groundwater and the sea. If flooding is forecast, warnings are issued using a set of three easily recognisable codes, plus a "warnings no longer in force" message.

Flood Alert

What it means

Flooding is possible. Be prepared.

What to do

- Monitor local news and weather forecasts.
- Be aware of water levels near you.
- Be prepared to act on your flood plan.
- Check on the safety of pets and livestock.
- Charge your mobile phone.
- Encourage the instigation of simple / low impact preparations for flooding.



Flood Warning

What it means

Flooding is expected. Immediate action is required

What to do

- Move cars, pets, food, valuables and important documents to safety.
- Get flood protection equipment in place.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
- Be prepared to evacuate your home.
- Protect yourself, your family and help others.
- Act on your flood plan.



Severe Flood Warning

What it means

Severe flooding. Danger to life.

What to do

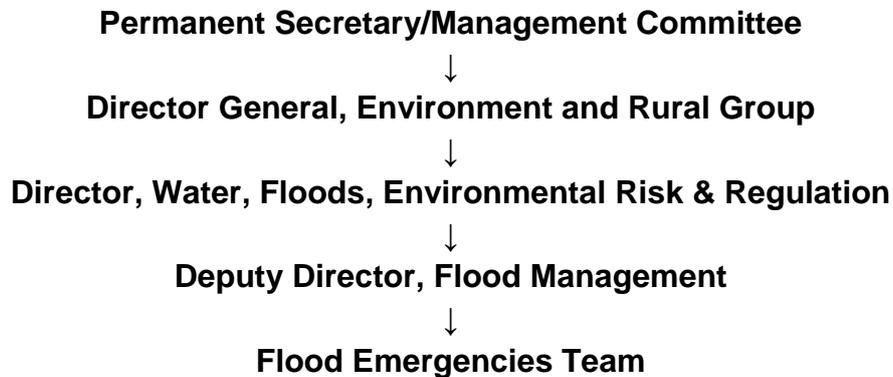
- Collect things you need for evacuation;
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so;
- Stay in a high place with a means of escape;
- Avoid electricity sources;
- Avoid walking or driving through flood water;
- In danger call 999 immediately;
- Listen to emergency services; and
- Act on your flood plan.



Section 4: The Defra Role

Responsibility in Defra

Within Defra, the hierarchy for flood management policy is:



Many flooding incidents (local incidents in terms of national emergency management, though of sufficient significance to attract Ministers' attention) are managed by the Flood Emergencies Team, without the need for senior management involvement. But the Departmental response to an actual or potential flood emergency would be escalated up through the hierarchy as necessary.

Flood Management Team role

Flood Management (FM) will generally take the lead in managing risk from flooding of the types described in section one. Although the FM team's responsibilities are largely policy development, in the event of an emergency all FM staff would be made available to support the response. Within FM, primary responsibility for triggering action and organising people into roles falls to the Flood Emergencies Team.

In preparation for serious flooding the Flood Emergencies Team must ensure:

- that all staff are familiar with the roles they might be expected to play, and that sufficient numbers are trained, tested and available to implement FM Division's responsibilities as defined in this Plan (training requirements are identified and incorporated into staff training plans, which are reviewed on an annual basis);
- there is clarity about what sort of briefing will be provided and by whom, with a view to rationalising and sharing briefing between different organisations;
- templates are prepared in advance wherever possible to avoid having to start from scratch at a time of high pressure – some of these materials will be based on models developed in previous flooding events;
- Customer Contact Unit are provided with standard fact sheets, background briefing, lines to take, letters etc that are pre-prepared in advance (as far as possible) and updated on the features of the emergency, so they will be able to use these to deal with many pieces of correspondence and PQs without reference to FM;

- arrangements are made in advance for briefing, reports etc to be sent direct to all those who need to see them, including Defra Ministers, senior officials, and other Government Departments; and
- arrangements are made in advance with members of the Defra network to provide advice in an emergency on the impact on their policy areas.

Maintaining vigilance and triggering action – at all hours

Defra's Flood Management team maintains a 24/7 duty roster throughout the year.

In working hours, as part of their other functions, FM Division has designated people to form an Emergency Management Team. Out-of-hours, there is always a duty officer, who will be the frontline of the Defra response up to the point at which responsibility is handed over to the Flood Emergencies Team (which may also be out of hours in the event of serious flooding).

To maintain the 24/7 ability to escalate preparedness and respond, all Defra duty officers have:

- a home or mobile broadband connection with ready access to the Defra IT system;
- access to this Plan;
- access to the Flood Emergencies Telephone Directory (not publicly available);
- access to the numbers and codes required to set up a conference call (not publicly available); and
- a dedicated duty mobile phone which is switched on at all times.

In the event of flood forecasts which show a medium risk of flooding (and occasionally a low risk if there is a reasonable chance that it will quickly escalate to medium risk) and/or prolonged periods of wet weather, the duty officer should liaise with the Flood Forecasting Centre and the Environment Agency's national or regional duty manager(s), depending on the circumstances. He/she may also contact (or be contacted by) the Civil Contingencies Secretariat and DCLG Resilience and Emergencies Team duty officers.

If serious flooding which may require the full activation of Defra's emergency operations (including the Emergency Operations Centre), the duty officer should contact the head of the Flood Emergencies Team and/or the Deputy Director, so that key staff can be quickly brought together to carry out the functions set out in this Plan. Contact numbers (including home telephone numbers for key staff) are included in the Flood Emergencies Telephone Directory. There is also a facility for sending text alerts to key staff in Defra and other key Departments and agencies.

Duty officers will be the first point of contact for the Defra Press Office for any flood management policy or media question arising out of hours. If he/she is unable to answer and it can't wait until office hours, he/she would contact the appropriate senior FM colleague.

The duty officer will normally handover to his/her successor at 09.00 each Monday morning. However, subject to negotiation between the officers concerned, the period of duty can be extended in weeks in which there are public holidays or privilege days at the beginning of the week (i.e. Bank Holiday Mondays, the Tuesday following Spring Bank Holiday and any office closures over the Christmas or Easter periods).

Finding out about flooding (actual or expected)

In theory, the Environment Agency (EA) have the responsibility for notifying Defra of actual or expected flooding and the expectation is that EA contacts will provide Defra with early notification by means of a telephone call to senior Flood Management staff, or the duty officer if out of hours. But the speed of events is sometimes such that Defra staff will first be alerted to flooding by media reports, calls from other parties and/or social media channels.

Defra staff (or the duty officer if out of hours) will look at a range of news information to identify areas which have been significantly affected by flooding. This includes Google news, the BBC's website and social media sites. Once alerted, for information on the scale and severity of the surface water flooding Defra staff may contact the appropriate local authority's (or authorities') emergency planning staff – taking care not to hinder the operational response.

To manage the risk of key players (including Defra) not being prepared for flood events, the FFC will set up a National Flood Advisory Service conference call when the daily Flood Guidance Statement shows at least a medium risk of flooding. The NFAS conference call includes Defra, EA, DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Team and the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS). Its purpose is to consider what action should be taken by the parties, individually and/or collectively.

As a matter of course, EA also provide notification of incidents and potential incidents via local HELP (Head Office Liaison Procedures) Reports. Where the EA decide to set up a national incident room, they will also provide regular National Situation Reports (Nat SitReps). EA also advise Defra on the developing scale of an event.

Gearing up for the worst

It is an axiom of emergency management that a precautionary approach is needed: it is better to overreact initially and scale back as necessary, rather than try to play "catch up" with what might become a rapidly escalating disaster. This is particularly pertinent to fast-moving events like flooding, where experience shows that events often produce major demands for:

- briefing of Ministers, including out of hours, both on the flood event and on policy issues that are raised by the media, in Parliament etc;

- co-ordinating briefing on impacts on Defra policy interests (including water supply and agriculture); and
- work to support the cross Government response including COBR meetings and Inter Departmental Ministerial Floods Recovery arrangements.

More specifically, it is important to ensure that the Defra machinery for managing flood emergencies can be adapted to deal with any challenge that a flood emergency might present. So there are four specific questions that the emergencies team and senior managers should consider at the outset and at frequent intervals thereafter:

- Resources – are there sufficient resources within FM to manage the response properly (rather than reliance on people to work harder and for longer)? If not, additional support might be drafted in from the Emergency Volunteers Register, the Water Directorate, or by calling on the wider Environment and Rural Group.
- Wider Defra impacts – is a major co-ordination necessary? It might be necessary if, for example, the potential consequences include major losses to agricultural crops or livestock, an interruption to water supply, serious impacts on waste disposal or serious damage the rural economy.
- Leadership – who should lead within Defra? The more serious the event the more senior the leader might need to be. That may be an issue for an early Emergency Management Committee meeting.
- Wider cross-Government impacts – will the floods seriously affect the policy interests of other Government Departments, and thereby give cause for Central Government arrangements (including COBR) to be invoked? Flooding may pose a risk to national wellbeing, through its impact on critical infrastructure, roads, schools, healthcare, power, telecommunications etc.; and even localised flooding can be especially challenging to manage if it involves deaths and/or major infrastructure threats, or prompts significant media and/or parliamentary interest.

These are questions that need to be addressed within a few hours of receiving information that points to a significant risk of serious flooding. But they are also questions that may need to be posed again later on, as circumstances change.

Establishing initial arrangements for the emergency response

On the basis of the information obtained, Defra's Flood Emergencies Team may take initial action to assess the situation and initiate appropriate response actions:

- across Government: establish contact with other Government Departments to assess the wider impacts and whether the emergency response should be escalated; and
- within Defra: establish contact with other teams (normally via an initial "bird table") to assess the wider impact on Defra interests and whether the emergency response should be escalated.

The early contacts with other Government Departments referred to above is normally by way of conference calls set up by Defra – usually by way of text and email alert to

established contacts. Defra's Flood Emergencies Team would, however, seek DCLG agreement before asking for reports from its Resilience and Emergencies Team around the country (in the Northern, Midlands, Southern and London Hubs), since it may be that they are already engaged in other emergency operations. Contact details for DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Team are included in the Flood Emergencies Telephone Directory.

The Flood Emergencies Team will then propose to senior managers arrangements that may include:

- a battle rhythm (i.e. shared timetable/daily schedule) for the duration of the response phase;
- an Emergency Management Committee meeting to allocate resources and responsibilities and oversee Defra-wide specific impacts;
- creating a Flood Briefing and Information Unit within the Flood Emergencies Team; and
- co-ordinating the Defra-wide and/or Lead Department responses from the dedicated Emergency Operations Centre, working jointly with the Environment Agency.

Communications and briefing are major issues to manage during and after a flood event and may create almost continuous demands from early morning to late at night. It is important that this burden does not fall on just one or two individuals. So the Flood Emergencies Team will, if necessary, implement a 24 hour rota system among senior staff for managing flooding out of normal working hours.

The Flood Emergencies Team should also ensure that all staff in the team are aware of what is expected of them. To help facilitate this, a brief get together of all senior staff ("mini bird table") may be convened at the beginning of each day (and repeated as necessary during the day) to ensure clarity about the work to be done which they will cascade to their teams. This should be done face to face where possible, or by conference call where necessary.

Annex 2 sets out the arrangements for creating a Flood Briefing and Information Unit. Annex 3 sets out the strategic communications issues. The Flood Emergencies Team will contribute to any Defra-impacts "bird table" discussions that are established. In addition, the Flood Emergencies Team should consider the need to establish a Science Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE). For example, an emergency involving breach, or likely breach, of a reservoir may require a SAGE, involving mapping experts, engineers etc.

Cross-Defra impacts and co-ordination

The impacts of flooding often affect Defra's specific policy responsibilities. In responding to a flood emergency, significant input may be sought from other parts of Defra, via an established internal network, who would be required to:

- assess and respond to the impact of the flooding for their policy area;

- discharge their normal policy and regulatory responsibilities throughout the response to the emergency;
- co-ordinate their response activities with stakeholders both inside and outside Defra;
- disseminate information about their specific activities in the form of Situation Reports and, in doing so, contribute to the preparation of a consolidated brief covering all of Defra's interests; and
- contribute to cross-Defra co-ordination (see below).

It is essential that the impacts of flooding are co-ordinated across all affected parts of Defra to ensure that Ministers are briefed and are able to represent this across Government and to Parliament. Within this Plan there are three key means for achieving this:

- extraordinary meetings of the Management Committee (see Annex 1); and/or
- contributing to briefing for co-ordination by the Flood Emergencies Team (or a Flood Briefing and Information Unit if established - see Annex 2); and/or.
- participating in "bird tables".

The Defra Contingency Planning and Security team (CPS), Finance, Legal, HR, IT, Science and Veterinary Group and Communications Directorate will also support the cross-Defra response, as necessary.

What we would do: day 1 issues

On day 1 of a serious, or potentially serious, flooding emergency, the Flood Emergencies Team and the Flood Management Deputy Director would contact the Director-General of Environment and Rural Group and Water Director. They would consider with the Permanent Secretary (as necessary and in consultation with Ministers, DCLG and CCS) the following key issues:

- whether an extraordinary Defra **Management Committee** meeting should be established to provide strategic co-ordination of the Defra-specific response, determine lines to take and intervention policy - see Annex 1 for more details;
- with CCS and DCLG, whether **Central Government machinery** needs to be activated; and/or
- whether an immediate Defra-specific **bird table** should be convened to gear up the cross-Defra understanding and response to the flooding.

In the event of possible serious flooding, the Flood Management Deputy Director and the head of the Flood Emergencies Team will take responsibility for ensuring that adequate manpower, accommodation and other resources are put in place. They would:

- **create a Flood Briefing and Information Unit (FBIU)** as set out in Annex 2 – working with Defra HR Managers to create this Unit, which would link with the Environment Agency, the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat and the staff in DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division responsible for the areas likely to be seriously affected;

- arrange with senior colleagues the **reallocation of resources and the reprioritisation of ongoing Flood Management work** – decisions would be made on what work should be dropped, delayed or done differently;
- **make arrangements for shift working** – it may be necessary to institute shifts to cover long days (e.g. 07.00 to 22.00 hours), or continuous 24/7 cover;
- **ensure adequate accommodation, security, refreshments and other support** (normally using the dedicated Emergency Operations Centre) for staff involved in the emergency response – these would be especially important in the event of long hours, shifts or 24/7 working; and
- **ensure access to IT support** – which needs to be accessible throughout the flooding event, including ensuring robust email links and internet access.

Facilities including Defra Emergency Operations Centre

In terms of the facilities available during an emergency, Defra has a dedicated Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). If the Flood Emergencies Team can respond to an emergency on its own, or with a small amount of imported support, it should be possible to manage the response from the desks allocated to the team for normal working. Should a more significant response be needed (e.g. if the emergency requires establishing a joint London Situation Room with the Environment Agency, or involves a number of Defra policy interests and/or other Government Departments) then the EOC may well be the best place to undertake this co-ordination. Among the considerations applying to use of the EOC are:

- its location is handy for briefing Defra Ministers;
- its IT and communications (e.g. video conferencing) equipment is state of the art and always available; and
- it takes staff away from the day job, which is useful in avoiding distractions (but can also separate them from colleagues who may need to be consulted and/or informed of developments).

The Flood Emergencies Team maintains a telephone line which would be used as a dedicated number for calls relating to the emergency from other parts of Defra, other Government Departments and agencies. It would be manned at all operational times (including any extended working hours, or 24/7 during serious emergencies). The Flood Emergencies Team also maintains a dedicated shared mailbox (floodemergencies@defra.gsi.gov.uk) for receipt of all communications on a flood emergency.

As the floods progress

As the floods progress, the Flood Management Deputy Director (or his/her appointee) will regularly review their management arrangements. In particular, consideration should be given to ensuring a fit for purpose Flood Briefing and Information Unit. The aim should be to allow seconded staff to return to their “day jobs” as soon as reasonably practicable. For

example, once the recovery phase is fully underway and response has been stood down, the Unit may have to deal only with Defra-specific inputs to DCLG's recovery work.

The Flood Management Deputy Director (or his/her appointee) should also take the lead in determining what arrangements should be made for identifying lessons from the floods. Lessons Identified Reports will be produced following termination of the response to an actual emergency or participation in a major exercise. In preparing a Lessons Identified Report, the opportunity would be taken to review the response activities – what went well and what are the areas for improvement.

Reporting arrangements and battle rhythm

An essential element of any response to a flood emergency is appropriate, proportionate and timely reporting – within Defra and across the Government Departments and agencies involved in the response.

As Lead Government Department, responsibility for the reporting arrangements falls to Defra. But for all Level 2 or 3 emergencies (i.e. significant and catastrophic emergencies - see section 2 above), CCS will establish a situation cell to ensure that there is a single, immediate, authoritative overview of the current situation available to Central Government decision makers. As part of its role the Situation Cell develops and maintains a Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP), consisting of information relating both to the scene and significant wider impacts. In order to ensure accurate and timely information is available in the CRIP, the Cabinet Office will request situation reports (SitReps) from Government Departments and agencies as appropriate. So, for level 2 and 3 emergencies, it is important that Defra, in its Lead Government Department role, does not duplicate requests for information, ask for it in a different form or seek input from contributors at times when they are required to provide it for the CCS CRIPs.

For level 1 emergencies (and any level 0 emergencies which demand some degree of demand cross-Whitehall coordination), where Defra has the job of setting out the reporting requirements, the default in terms of report format for other Government Departments and agencies will be the Central Government situation report template, which is reproduced in Annex 4 of this Plan.

As well as written reports, Defra, as Lead Government Department, will rely on regular conference calls with key players in order to capture the key information on the emergency. But the timing of these Defra-chaired conference calls, and the overall "Battle Rhythm" will need to be coordinated with, in particular, the Environment Agency's national incident management team and DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division. Both EA and DCLG will need to have time to collect information from people involved in the response to the emergency at the local level (i.e. EA regional and/or local teams and the Local Resilience Fora) before dialling into the Defra-chaired conference calls.

The actual battle rhythm for a flood emergency will depend on many factors, including the scale of the flooding and when it occurs (in or out of hours for example). But the decision

will be made by the Defra Flood Emergencies team on the basis of the default battle rhythm set out in Annex 5 to this Plan. Each Defra-chaired conference call will be followed as soon as possible thereafter by a short, action-oriented notes based on the same headings as in the CCS template for CRIPs set out in Annex 5 to this Plan. The notes will go to the following recipients:

- Defra Secretary of State's and Floods Minister's private secretaries;
- Defra special advisers.
- Defra press office duty officer;
- Permanent Secretary and Defra Management Committee members;
- The relevant Director-General;
- Water Director;
- Flood Management Deputy Director;
- Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office;
- DCLG Resilience and Emergencies team;
- Other Flood Management colleagues; and
- Any other Defra colleague, other Government Department or agency whose areas of responsibility is, or is likely to be, affected (especially BIS, MoD, DH, Met Office, DfT, HMT, DWP, No 10).

In practice, a wide circulation should be given. Although this means that people will be informed of events which may not, in practice, affect their areas of responsibility, it is impossible to second guess how an event will develop and early information may avoid "catch-up" later for some.

Section 5: Other Key National Partners - The Environment Agency and DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Team

The division of responsibilities

Other Government Departments and agencies are required to assess and respond to the impact of flooding for their policy area, including by discharging their usual policy and regulatory responsibilities. They should also contribute to a co-ordinated Government effort to manage the response to flooding.

A regular and effective two-way flow of information on the flooding and its impacts across all affected Departments is necessary to ensure that all play their proper part in relation to a flood emergency.

In responding to any flood emergency, Defra, the Environment Agency and local responders will play key roles. The following table provides a summary of those roles.

Summary of Roles during a flood emergency

Role	Defra	Environment Agency	Other local responders
Preparing for flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that structures and resources are in place to ensure that the Flood Emergencies Team and other parts of Defra can play their part in responding to a flooding event. Encouraging Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) to prepare appropriate emergency plans for flooding and providing guidance. Ensuring central Government has appropriate national planning assumptions for flooding. Planning and participating in emergency exercises. Every Friday to provide weekly reviews of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing and communicating flood risk to LRFs and to other Category 1 and 2 responding organisations to support Multi-Agency Flood Planning. Increasing flood awareness among at-risk communities. Maintaining and extending flood warning systems and other flood forecasting and detection systems. Receiving weather, tidal surge and river flow information to assess flood risk. Preparing operational plans for managing EA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Resilience Fora (RRF) support local planning. Local Resilience Fora lead emergency planning across all Civil Contingencies Act 2004 responders.

	readiness/risk on behalf of the Secretary of State	flood risk management systems (including barriers, sluices and temporary defences). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcing the reservoir safety regime. 	
When flooding is forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC), EA and Met Office information to anticipate events (and their likely scale) as far as possible and, on that basis, raise levels of preparedness in Central Government. Where possible the transfer from a state of readiness to taking action will be prompted by the FFC arranging a National Flood Advisory Service telecon. This normally involves Defra, Cabinet Office, Met Office, FFC, Environment Agency and DCLG. Other Government Departments may also be invited. This early opportunity to assess the threat may then lead to Defra arranging a Lead Government Department telecom or taking a watching brief. Initiating communications across Central Government, including press offices and providing situation reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison with the FFC on weather forecasts. Issuing flood warnings. Preparing and operating EA flood risk management systems. Notifying Defra, emergency services and local responders on likelihood and impact of potential flooding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triggering local emergency plans including establishing Gold, Silver and Bronze commands led by the police in accordance with their generic emergency response plans.
When flooding happens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advising Defra Senior Management, Ministers, CCS and other Government Departments and agencies on the developing scale of events. Ensuring effective communications with Parliament, the news media and others Collecting briefing on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing support to Gold, Silver and Bronze commands. Ensuring continued operation of EA flood risk management systems, warning systems and the EA website. Providing situation reports and other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gold, Silver and Bronze commands manage emergency response (rescue, shelter, feeding etc).

	<p>impacts of the flooding on all interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with CCS in escalating or de-escalating the Central Government response. • Co-ordinating the cross Government and multi-agency response to the flooding (supporting CCS if event escalated to COBR). • Facilitating Ministerial and other VIP visits to the affected areas. • Ensuring that clear responsibilities are established for overseeing recovery and aftermath issues. 	<p>briefing to Defra/OGDs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Ministerial and other VIP visits. 	
When flooding subsides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with CLG as Lead Department for recovery • Advising on follow-up Ministerial/VIP visits. • Ensuring arrangements are in place for identifying any lessons to be learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting follow up Ministerial/VIP visits • Inspecting and repairing flood defences • Supporting and carrying out lessons identified exercises, and follow-up action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting follow-up Ministerial/VIP visits • Supporting lesson identified exercises.

Working with the Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is the principal flood risk management operating authority in England. The Environment Agency is also a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

In carrying out these roles, and with particular regard to flood emergency planning, through the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Environment Agency will:

- communicate the risk of flooding (using campaigns, community engagement events, multiple media channels including social media, media releases, radio and television interviews, well as the direct issue of flood warnings to over 1 million homes and businesses) to increase the awareness of people living, working and travelling in river and coastal flood risk areas so that they can take steps to prepare themselves and their properties for flooding;

- work with civil contingency partners and critical national infrastructure operators to help them understand the risk of flooding in their locality, by providing flood data and mapping and to help them to develop incident response plans (inc. multi-agency flood plans) where required;
- alert and engage LRF partners to actual flooding (including calling Local Flood Advisory Service telecons or joining precautionary/severe weather telecons called by partners), attend response and recovery SCGs/TCGs (Gold/Silver) with appropriately trained personnel;
- work with spatial planners and advise developers on improving the development of locations so that flood resistance, resilience and safe access and escape are put in place;
- provide and develop flood forecasting and warning services, currently for fluvial and coastal flooding and in some areas groundwater flooding, so that prior notice of flooding can be provided to civil contingency partners, business and the public;
- deploy with partners temporary flood defences where impacts can be mitigated;
- operate its flood defences for rivers and the coast so that protection from flooding can be put in place; and
- provide operational support to other organisations where resources allow.

In practice, there is very close working between Defra and the Environment Agency in a flood emergency situation. A small number of Agency staff will be co-located with Defra staff in the event of Defra's Emergency Operations centre being opened, and there is close liaison and report sharing between Defra's and the Agency's national teams.

Working with DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Team

During a major incident, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) will provide a Government Liaison Officer and support team as required. They will attend the local SCG on behalf of the Lead Government Department (Defra) and represent the interests of other Departments as required. They will act as a conduit for information (including situational awareness) between central government departments and the local area.

These staff can provide particular support in relation to consequence management - where the scale and nature of a flooding incident is such that the effects are likely to be felt outside the immediate locality or may overwhelm the local response. They work closely with other Government Departments and can help local responders to ensure that a coordinated and coherent message is given to the public.

DCLG also has a key role in co-ordinating Fire Service Assets at a National Level. Catastrophic and large scale incidents place significant demands on local Fire and Rescue Services and have often required a national co-ordinated response from across the

country. The **National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework**³ (NCAF) provides support and advice to the Fire and Rescue Services and Central Government during incidents that are of national significance and/or require national co-ordination.

DCLG's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA) will be responsible for the co-ordination and advisory framework structure during incidents of national significance and/or require national co-ordination.

During activation the DCLG Operations Centre will be considered as the hub of the NCAF arrangements and will provide support for the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA) and the DCLG Resilience Team.

Where co-ordination and communication is required over a number of local resilience forum areas then DCLG (either at its own request or at the request from partners / LGD) may decide to convene a Response Co-ordinating Group (Res CG). This meeting will invite affected areas to participate and provide advice on co-ordination and communication.

DCLG has a specific role in the recovery phase from a flood emergency and where Central Government co-ordination is required; DCLG will take on the role of Lead Government Department for flood recovery.

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7629/opguidancencaf.pdf

Annex 1: Extraordinary meetings of Defra's Emergency Management Committee in the event of a Flood Emergency

The role of Defra's Management Committee

In the event of a flood emergency, Defra's Management Committee would be the strategic decision making body responsible for considering how the Department should respond. In doing so it will assess the impact of the emergency on Defra interests and provide a lead to the Flood Emergencies Team on formulating a strategic policy to mitigate the effects of the emergency.

The first extraordinary meeting of the Management Committee will be at an appropriate time after it has become clear that a serious flood emergency is expected or has occurred. It may conclude that decisions relating to the emergency response should be taken by the Flood Emergencies Team, leaving it to focus on how the Department as a whole should respond and in particular the budgetary and resource aspects.

Defra's Permanent Secretary decides if the scale and severity of the emergency merits an extraordinary meeting of the Management Committee.

Extraordinary Management Committee

- Chair: Permanent Secretary
- Secretariat: Permanent Secretary's Office
- All Defra Directors General
- Defra Chief Scientific Adviser
- All non-executive members
- Director of Communications
- Director, Strategic Finance and Performance
- Director, Water, Floods, Environmental Risk and Regulation
- Deputy Director, Flood Management
- Director, Legal

Standard agenda

- Overview of the emergency
- Overview of Government response
- Coordination and liaison with Cabinet Office, other Government Departments and the devolved administrations
- Activities in the field
- Communication issues
- Resourcing issues, including Emergency Volunteers Register

- Financial summary and budget outlook
- Impact of outbreak on other Departmental responsibilities, including business continuity
- Possibility of future meetings

Annex 2: Flood Management Briefing and Information Unit

This Annex sets out issues around the creation of a Defra Flood Briefing and Information Unit (FBIU) in the event of an actual or expected flood emergency that is likely to require a prolonged or highly intensive response.

Role of the FBIU

The FBIU's role would include working alongside the Environment Agency, DCLG Resilience and Emergencies team and CCS (as appropriate) to produce briefing on the flooding for:

- National Security Council meetings in COBR (i.e. Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP) reports);
- Defra Management Committee;
- Defra and other Ministers (and senior officials) including for attendance at COBR;
- Number 10; and
- any Ministerial Floods Recovery Group.

To fulfil its role, the Unit will collect, assess and quality check information from:

- across Defra on the impacts of the floods (on, for example, agriculture, water supply, sewerage, waste, rural economy).
- the Flood Management team on flood risk management issues (e.g. briefing on funding, response arrangements etc);
- Other Government Departments and agencies, drawing on sitrep material as much as possible.

The Unit would act as a Gateway for all briefing requests and:

- receive and log all briefing requests;
- assess their reasonableness, being prepared to take a tough line on unreasonable requests, based on:
 - how important the information sought is likely to be in relation to the additional pressure it will create on those expected to provide it;
 - how easy it will be to provide; and
 - whether similar information has already been provided.
- allocate briefing requests appropriately;
- quality assure drafts; and
- deliver the final product to the requestor.

The head of an FBIU would need to consider the following:

- Scheduling reports so that the timing fits with the “battle rhythm” established for the emergency – scheduled situation reports from EA, DCLG, Defra policy divisions and

other Government Departments should provide the raw material for briefing for Ministers and senior officials, so that additional requests are minimised;

- The types of briefing and reporting that are needed and the distribution for each of them;
- The extent to which briefing needs to be checked by the Flood Emergencies Team, EA and other staff – the expectation being that staff engaged in the response are not diverted unnecessarily;
- How the FBIU will work with Defra’s Communications Directorate and the communications teams in other organisations, so that there is consistency of messages and lines;
- The need for Parliamentary material – Defra Ministerial statements, responses to PQs, Ministers’ correspondence etc;
- The use of Defra’s pages on GOV.UK as a means of communicating important public information about the floods, with links to other relevant sites;
- Any likely or planned VIP visits to the flood affected areas – so that briefing can be provided at short notice, as necessary; and
- The recording of requests and the filing of briefing produced, so that this can be accessed in any subsequent lessons learned exercise.

Establishing an FBIU

For a relatively minor event the functions of the FBIU would be performed by staff within the Flood Management Team, by reallocation of staff and reprioritisation of work. For what may be a major or prolonged event, the Flood Management Deputy Director would take responsibility for establishing the FBIU in conjunction with Defra HR teams. The size and composition of the FBIU would depend on the event, but it would need to include staff with relevant experience who could quickly assume responsibilities without the need for advance training. Staff might be drawn initially from within the Directorate within which Floods Management sits, or the wider Directorate-General. The Head of the FBIU would normally report to the FM Deputy Director, but he/she would be encouraged to act autonomously as far as possible.

Closure of the FBIU

The FBIU should be closed down as soon as reasonably possible and work “mainstreamed” within Flood Management Division or elsewhere.

Annex 3: Strategic Communications in a Flood Emergency

Communications arrangements and role of Defra Communications Directorate

Defra Communications Directorate is responsible for co-ordinating the provision of consistent public information, in conjunction with the lead policy teams (of which Flood Management is one). Defra's communications professionals use all relevant channels to ensure effective communication with the public, including the use of media, websites, help lines etc. They also liaise with the cross-Government communications networks, as necessary.

The extent of involvement of communications professionals in flood events depends on the individual circumstances. The following table is used as a rule of thumb:

Media Interest and Management Response

Level of media interest	Management Response
LOW (minor event)	The Environment Agency, Defra's Flood Emergencies Team and their respective press offices will deal with any communication issues arising from flood events with low media interest.
MEDIUM (significant event)	If flooding which is not restricted to small local areas occurs, Defra's Communications Directorate may establish additional arrangements to co-ordinate briefing and media issues in liaison with the Environment Agency, Defra's Flood Emergencies Team and the Government Communications Network.
HIGH (serious event)	If there is high media attention resulting from widespread flooding, the Cabinet Office may establish a News Coordination Centre to co-ordinate information flows between Defra, other Government Departments, Gold Commands and the media.

Communications Strategy

Good communications are at the heart of an effective response to and recovery from an emergency. Preparing for, responding to and recovering from flooding will depend significantly on cooperation between Central and Local Government, public authorities, business, non-Governmental organisations, the voluntary sector and individuals. An emergency on a major scale needs strong national direction of public information from the outset. A well-informed public is better able to respond to an emergency and to minimise the impact of the emergency on the community. Timely advice and information will help prepare those at risk for the potential impact of a flood and will be critical to its subsequent management. Part of this is also avoiding unnecessary alarm.

The Flood Briefing and Information Unit (see Annex 2) will take the lead in working with Defra's Communications Directorate, the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Unit, Defra's Customer Contact Unit and other Government Departments in developing a communications strategy tailored to the specifics of the flood event. Typically, the requirements will include:

- Ministerial media interviews – including short notice appearances on TV at times of high risk to public safety.
- Ministerial (and other VIP) visits to the flood affected areas.
- Ministerial Speeches and/or statements to Parliament.
- Producing public information (with Defra Communications Directorate) and media briefing on the nature and scale of the flooding.
- Ensuring that the Defra pages on GOV.UK include well-signposted material that meets a variety of customer needs.

It is important that communications consider all of the potential and actual impacts of flooding - while there may be a tendency to focus on the flooding itself, the fact that it might have caused substantial disruption to normal life or damage should be recognised and appropriate information, advice and guidance communicated.

Ministerial involvement in the flooding

Experience of flooding from summer 2007 through to the events of 2012 demonstrated the value of Ministers playing a key role by:

- making visits to the affected areas (taking care not to divert the attention of staff involved in the emergency response);
- making detailed statements to Parliament;
- being seen to quickly establish responsibilities for Flood Recovery issues; and
- holding frequent “surgeries” at which any MP could raise constituency issues.

Given the importance of recovery issues, these roles have often shared been with DCLG Ministers.

Annex 4: Situation Reporting Arrangements

Routine reports on flood events

A flooding incident will automatically generate reports from the Environment Agency's local and/or regional teams. Head Office Emergency Liaison Procedure (HELP) reports are received in the dedicated floodemergencies@defra.gsi.gov.uk mailbox (along with Flood Forecasting Centre Flood Guidance Statements). When open, the Environment Agency's National Incident Room will also send situation reports to Defra's Flood Emergencies Team. These provide important information. For localised or relatively minor flooding, such reports need little or no supplementing and provide the basis for reporting within Central Government and to Ministers.

Additional reporting

For more serious flood events, it is necessary for Defra, as Lead Government Department, to commission more comprehensive reports from other Government Departments and agencies. These can then be consolidated and used by the Flood Management Briefing Information Unit and others for briefing and other information purposes.

In order to meet the needs (if any) of the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat and to ensure consistency, a Central Government situation report template has been developed. Although designed for use by the COBR situation cell, it should also be used (adapted as necessary) for level 1 flood emergencies that do not trigger the activation of COBR.

Central Government Situation Report Template

Central Government Situation Report Template		
This document offers a template Situation Report format to be used during a crisis or emergency where there is a need to communicate situational information between interested agencies.		
SITREP Number:	XX	This document and the information it contains will be used to inform Central Government. You will not need to complete each section in every emergency.
Date:	DD-MMM-YY	Time (24hr): HH.MM
Lead Official:		
Email:		
Tel:		
Fax:		

Alternate Contact:	
Email:	
Tel:	
Fax:	
Contacts	
<u>Departmental Operations Centre</u> Telephone: Fax: Email:	
<u>Other Key Contacts</u> (a) [] Telephone: Fax: Email:	
(b) [] Telephone: Fax: Email:	

This Situation Report provides key information and data on the present situation, it has been validated by the relevant Departmental / agency officials. The information contained herein can be disseminated to other agencies as necessary – where clarification is required the lead contact should, in the first instance, be contacted.

New information should be highlighted using a light shade background colour.

1. Key Issues for CRIP

This section is used to direct the Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell to specific issues that the author believes should be reflected in the incident Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP) produced by the Situation Cell. It will be for the Situation Cell to decide whether the information recommended is incorporated.

- Point #1
- Point #2

2. Department / Government Office Key Issues

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with the key issues that the reporting agency is currently dealing with or require wider visibility i.e. that assistance may be called for. This section should also note if there are any restrictions on the report's distribution i.e. "for Central Government Departments only".

- Point #1

- Point #2

3. Current Situation

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with the key issues relating to the situation. It should describe the current situation in sufficient detail for, if necessary, decisions to be made. Suggested topics that should be covered can be found in Annex A.

- Point #1
- Point #2

4. Background / Overview Look

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with any background details that would assist the reader in understanding the situation or specific key issues being reported.

- Point #1
- Point #2

5. Operational Response

This is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with the reporting agency's operational response to the situation. It should describe the operational response in sufficient detail for, if necessary, decisions to be made. Suggested topics that should be covered are provided in Annex A.

- Point #1
- Point #2

6. Resources & Readiness

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with any resourcing and readiness issues that the reporting agency is currently dealing with or require wider visibility.

- Point #1
- Point #2

7. Next Steps / Forward Look

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with information relating to what action is planned to take place over the coming reporting period or longer as appropriate.

- Point #1
- Point #2

8. Political / Policy

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with the key political or policy issues. Issues reported should have relevance to either Central Government and/or the wider responding community.

- Point #1
- Point #2

9. Media and Communications

This section is used to provide Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell and agencies with the key media and communications issues. Issues reported should have relevance to either Central Government and/or the wider responding community.

Media coverage	
Media tone / Current themes	
Key Lines to take / Public messages	
Warning and Informing / Public Advice	
Ministerial / VIP Visits	
Good News	
Forward Look	
Other media issues	

10. Human Resources and Staffing Issues

This section is used to raise any manpower or staffing issues related to the incident either centrally or in responding agencies.

- Point #1
- Point #2

11. Finance

This section is used to raise any financing issues related to the incident. It does not relate to the economy.

- Point #1
- Point #2

12. Other Issues not covered elsewhere

- Point #1
- Point #2

13. Information Requirements / Requested Clarification

This section is used to seek information or clarification from Cabinet Office / COBR Situation Cell or other agencies. Where the information or clarification would be sourced from a specific agency this should be identified. This section does not negate the need to contact agencies directly but does provide a record of requested information or matters for clarification.

- IR-01: **Priority** : xxx
- RC-01: **Priority** : xxx
- IR-02: Routine : xxx
- RC-02: Routine : xxx

14. Next SITREP will be issued at

- The next [Department] Situation Report will be issued at [DTG].

15. Distribution

1. COBR Situation Cell
2. Civil Contingencies Secretariat
3. [next]
4. [next]

16. Attached tables, Maps, etc.

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

It is important to note that the timing of report submissions must be in accordance with the “battle rhythm” established for the flood emergency (see Annex 5).

Reports on the flooding situation – Other Defra Divisions

Defra Divisions are responsible for providing intelligence which covers their own policy areas. These are co-ordinated by the Flood Emergencies Team to provide a consolidated picture of the impacts of Defra’s business. In a serious flood event, this may be done by a Flood Briefing and Information Unit created (see Annex 2).

Annex 5: Model Battle Rhythm and Agenda for Teleconferences

Model Battle Rhythm

The following is the Default Battle Rhythm that would apply to a flooding emergency requiring Defra to act as Lead Government Department where COBR has not been activated. It would be adapted, as necessary, according to the seriousness of the expected or actual flooding and to take account of the timing of COBR meetings.

Battle Rhythm

Time	Event	Involving
Before 08.30	EA and DCLG RED teams collate information from local/area staff and partner organisations.	Local Resilience Fora / Strategic Coordinating Groups. Environment Agency area and regional teams.
08.30	EA and DCLG RED sitreps sent to flood emergencies mailbox.	EA and DCLG. Defra then circulate to OGDs and internally.
09.00	Defra chaired teleconference, followed as quickly as possible thereafter by written note of the discussion	Defra Flood Emergencies Team Defra Communications Directorate Other affected Defra policy divisions Civil Contingencies Secretariat Environment Agency Other Government Departments (all those whose business may be affected by the flooding)
11.00-13.00	Other organisations carry out any internal discussions, in advance of afternoon conference calls.	Civil Contingencies Secretariat Environment Agency Other Government Departments (all those whose business may be affected by the flooding)
12.00	Defra internal bird table on actual or potential impacts on Defra business.	Defra Flood Emergencies Team and other policy leads
Before 14.30	EA and DCLG RED teams collate information from local/area staff and partner organisations.	Local Resilience Fora / Strategic Coordinating Groups. Environment Agency area and regional teams
14.30	EA and DCLG RED sitreps sent to flood emergencies mailbox.	EA and DCLG. Defra then circulate to OGDs and internally.
15.00	Defra chaired teleconference, followed	Defra Flood Emergencies Team

	as quickly as possible thereafter by written note of the discussion	Defra Communications Directorate Other affected Defra policy divisions Civil Contingencies Secretariat Environment Agency Other Government Departments (all those whose business may be affected by the flooding).
Repeat as necessary throughout the 24 hour period		
Throughout the day Environment Agency and DCLG RED will tell Defra of any major developments and forward written report as they come in.		

Model Standard Agenda for teleconferences

For the Defra chaired conference calls, the standard agenda (adapted as necessary) would be:

- Situation updates from:
 - Flood Forecasting Centre
 - Environment Agency
 - DCLG Resilience and Emergencies Division
 - other participating Government Departments
- Impacts
 - Properties
 - Critical infrastructure
 - Other
- Response/preparedness arrangements
- Longer term outlook
- Briefing and media lines for Ministers and the public
- Parliamentary issues (including arrangements for contacting MPs, if appropriate)
- Summary of actions
- Next teleconference

DCLG may also host teleconferences with representative of Strategic Coordinating Groups as part of their generic emergency arrangements. Defra would normally participate in these.

The bird table style will be used for conference calls and the majority face-to-face meetings. Bird tables allow brief and punchy situation reports on all aspects of the operation to those concerned and are focussed on identifying key emerging issues and allocating responsibilities

Annex 6: Checklist of key actions and decisions for Defra Staff

Introduction

This checklist sets out the key actions and decisions to be taken in relation to a flooding event. It focuses on what needs to be done rather than who should do it (as a preassigned person might be absent at the time). Rather, a hierarchy for making decisions and taking action has been established below, for all of the key stages.

Who's who?

Defra Senior Management (SM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director-General, Environment and Rural Group • Water Director (likely to be designated as Lead Director when floods happen)
Flood Management team (FM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Director • Emergency team lead • Other team leaders • Others as appropriate
Duty Officers (DO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weekly duty officer responsible for out of hours actions
Flood Briefing and Information Unit (FBIU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary unit set up at time of flooding (see Annex 2)
CPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra Contingency Planning and Security Division

Prerequisites

SM FM DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure familiarity with, and have available out of hours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This Lead Government Department Plan ○ Flood Emergencies Telephone Directory ○ Cabinet Office Concept of Operations
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Peacetime role

SM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain awareness of potential flooding via normal media
FM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain awareness of potential flooding via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ normal media ○ Flood Forecasting Centre Flood Guidance Statements Extreme Rainfall Alerts (if any) ○ Environment Agency website during heightened risk

<p>DO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the duty mobile phone with them and turned on at all times • Maintain home/mobile access to Defra IT systems, with ready access to the “floodreports” and “floodemergencies” mailboxes. • Out of hours, maintain awareness of potential flooding via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ normal media ○ Flood Forecasting Centre Flood Guidance Statements Extreme Rainfall Alerts (if any) ○ Environment Agency website during heightened risk • Share information on flood risk by circulating the Flood Guidance Statements at least twice a week (more at times of heightened risk). • Out of hours, as needed, be the first point of contact for Defra Press Office and/or Private Office queries
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Flooding role

First notification

<p>FM (in hours), DO (out of hours)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect the following essential early information from the EA, so far as it is available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When and where has flooding happened (or is predicted)? ○ Extent of the floods (actual or potential) ○ A general prognosis – is the situation improving or deteriorating? ○ The status of media interest ○ Relevant details of EA response including whether they are participating in Gold commands etc ○ Any other information which the EA may have (e.g. about deaths, evacuation) • For dam breach, ask in addition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has an inspecting engineer been appointed? ○ When was the dam last inspected? ○ What is its risk category? ○ Has the reservoir undertaker informed the local emergency services?
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Immediate decisions/actions (notification coming out of hours)

DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the seriousness of the situation based on information gathered from EA and by reference to Table 2. Consider also contacting DCLG’s Resilience and Emergencies team for more information • Notifications in the middle of the night of actual or potential flooding at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local or Level 1, with as yet no media interest, can wait until work resumes (or more social hours if it is at the weekend) ○ Level 2 or 3 cannot wait • Consider (in consultation where possible with the FM Deputy Director) whether immediate action should be taken to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ inform the Duty Minister and Defra senior management; ○ inform the Duty Defra Press Officer, who may need quick lines to take ○ advise Civil Contingencies Secretariat that the Central Government response to the event should be escalated to COBR ○ inform Number 10 (in consultation with Civil Contingencies Secretariat) ○ Also consider alerting other Government Departments, e.g. DfT if a main railway line or motorway is flooded. ○ Hand event over to FM when normal office hours resume.
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Immediate decisions/actions (in hours)

FM (with SM and CPS where possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the seriousness of the situation based on information gathered and the impacts across Defra and across Government. Bear in mind that potentially catastrophic flooding could result from e.g. a North Sea surge or a dam breach. In particular consider escalating the event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ within Defra, i.e. to involve SM and the Management Committee; ○ within Government, i.e. so a decision can be made on the need for the COBR machinery to be used (including a Science Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE)).
FM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For anything other than a purely local event, produce immediate note summarising what has happened (or is predicted) and decisions on how it should be handled, including media handling lines, and send to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defra Ministers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Special Advisers ○ Defra Management Committee Members ○ Defra Communications Directorate ○ Defra policy teams ○ Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat ○ DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies team ○ Other Government Departments, as necessary ○ Others, as advised by CCS (e.g. Number 10)
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Immediate decisions/actions when event looks serious and/or likely to be prolonged

SM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider, with Permanent Secretary, convening extraordinary Management Committee to manage cross-Defra impacts (Flood Emergencies provide the Secretariat, supported by CPS and/or others as required) ● Agree location of single EA/Defra London Situation Room
SM FM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss, agree and implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reallocation and reprioritisation of ongoing FM work ○ Establish Flood Briefing and Information Unit (FBIU) ○ Consider the need for shift working in FM (including a daily rota for out of hours activities) ○ Confirm roles and responsibilities between Lead Director and FM ○ Secure accommodation, security, staffing, welfare, IT issues to allow out of hours or continuous working ○ Set up rota system for briefing Ministers and attending COBR meetings out of hours
FM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agree timing of initial Parliamentary Statement. ● Establish battle rhythm for the event, in liaison with CCS, EA and DCLG ● Seek information from EA on topical flood management issues in areas actually or potentially affected by flooding

Ongoing roles during a serious and/or prolonged flood event

SM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chair/attend extraordinary Management Committee meetings• Chair/attend/support Ministers at COBR meetings• Ensure Defra Ministers are fully briefed on cross-Defra impacts• Ensure Defra Ministers are fully briefed on cross-Government impacts (supporting CCS if event escalated to COBR)• Ensure arrangements in place for identifying lessons from the floods
FM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support SM at COBR/Management Committee meetings and ensure outcomes are cascaded within Defra• Participate in cross Defra Bird Tables.• Contribute to Central Government recovery coordination arrangements.• Contribute to lessons identified arrangements.